



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH &
DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 11, 2007

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SEPTEMBER IS SUICIDE PREVENTION AWARENESS MONTH

Suicide is One Tennessee's Greatest Public Health Threats

Nashville—In Tennessee, an estimated 750 men, women, and children die by suicide each year—more than the number who die from homicide, AIDS, or drunk driving. The Tennessee Department of Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities (TDMHDD), along with the Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network (TSPN) and the Tennessee Lives Count Project (TLC), is working to increase suicide prevention awareness during September, National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. Tennesseans need to know that suicides can be prevented.

Suicide is the third leading cause of death among youth and young adults ages 15-24 in Tennessee and throughout the entire nation. The rate of suicide in Tennessee is 13.4 per 100,000 individuals, higher than the national average of 10.8 per 100,000 individuals. Unfortunately, Tennessee's suicide rate ranks 19th in the nation.

As a result of these negative statistics, Tennessee has become a national leader in suicide prevention. In 2000, Tennessee implemented The National Strategies for Suicide Prevention which resulted in the coordination of the eight regional groups that make up TSPN. The state assists the Jason Foundation in providing school-based suicide prevention curriculums throughout Tennessee. TDMHDD is also a federal grant recipient for the TLC initiative which aims to provide Gate Keeper Training to 14,000 adults who work with high risk youth by the end of 2008. These important individuals are trained to recognize depression, as well as the early warning signs of suicide.

"In 90 percent of instances, suicide is the result of unrecognized, untreated, or poorly treated mental illness and can be said to be the terminal outcome of certain mental illnesses," stated Tennessee Mental Health and Developmental Disabilities Commissioner Virginia Trotter Betts. "Suicide is the leading cause of violent deaths worldwide, above homicide and death due to natural disasters. Suicide can be prevented, but Tennesseans need to keep educating themselves about mental health and mental illness in order to seek early effective and needed help for themselves or their loved ones."

Suicide does not discriminate by gender, economic status, race, or ethnicity. More suicides occur among the workforce than any other demographic, and the majority of those who die by suicide have seen their primary health care provider in the month prior to their death.

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A series of important activities to promote suicide prevention and connect individuals and communities with the proper information and resources will be held throughout September all across the state. Please join TDMHDD, TSPN and TLC staff on Wednesday, September 12, 2007 for the presentation of the Governor's Suicide Prevention Awareness Month proclamation in a ceremony to be held at the Tennessee Education Association located at 801 Second Avenue North in Nashville from 10:30-11:30 a.m.

Please visit www.tspn.org for information on suicide and suicide prevention. For additional resources and mental health information, please contact TDMHDD's Office of Public Information and Education at (615) 253-4812 or visit www.state.tn.us/mental.

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